Educational Technology Leadership Comprehensive Examination

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My colleagues and family played an integral part in aspiring me to seek a degree program that would enhance my administrative and technology leadership skills. Upon reviewing a multitude of degree programs, I decided that Lamar University’s Educational Technology Leadership program would best suit my leadership aspirations. Lamar University has provided me with a wealth of knowledge in administrative and technology leadership. My internship through Lamar University has given me ample leadership opportunities. I have embraced the opportunities with enthusiasm and empowerment. I feel that the insight gained through my Lamar University internship has transformed me into a committed leader that provides equity for our schools. I have become a life-long learner who will always seek new knowledge in instructional, organizational, and transformational leadership. This comprehensive examination will provide insight into my journey to becoming a 21st Century leader and life-long learner. It contains my position goals, leadership goals, educational technology vision, reflections, professional development plans, and my curriculum vitae.

**Position Goal**

I have four positions that I would like to acquire throughout my career. Currently, I would like to become an active member of our SBDM. Since I have already passed the Texes Principal certification, I would like to become an assistant principal. As an assistant principal, I would like to emerge my campus in relevant and realistic technology integration. After a few years as an assistant principal, I would like to become a Principal or Director of Technology.

I have also thought about teaching at a community college or university, but I have only entertained that thought. I really think my interest in college or university level has to do with more income for my family. I would like to teach at a university level if it involved distant learning.

**Leadership** **Goal**

My leadership goal is to create an innovative, safe, and welcoming learning environment that actively engages and empowers all stakeholders. I want to lead others to the enthusiasm and empowerment that I have with educating students. I want to lead others to motivate students to feel enthusiastic and empowered at school. Professionally, I hope that my leadership skills will decrease the dropout rate in my district. Personally, I hope I can motivate and empower my children’s teachers. I want my children to be enthusiastic and empowered at school.

**Educational Technology Vision**

I envision a future that provides model classrooms that are technology driven and encompassed in “cloud” computing. My vision is to create a district that provides innovative and captivating classrooms that engage all stakeholders. I want to utilize my technology and leadership skills to create model classrooms throughout our district.

When I think of creating a model classroom that would motivate, engage, and captivate students I think about my son. Recently, my family was playing the Playstation 3 (PS3) version of “You Don’t Know Jack.” My nine-year-old son, Josh, amazed me with his ability to answer several questions that many adults could not answer. What was even more amazing was his response after each correct answer. He would look at me with an enormous smile and enthusiastically say, “Thanks, to video games!”

Josh was on cloud nine and very excited about his knowledge that he had gained from video games. During our game playing experience, Josh continued to make comments about how much he had learned from video games and online. He really got me laughing when he said, “my brain is like “the cloud’s” massive storage ability.” The *Horizon Report* mentioned, “Cloud computing currently includes,…, massive computing resources for storage and processing” (Johnson, L., Smith, R., Levine, A., & Haywood, K., 2010, p.9).

Decades ago, Game-Based learning was not a concept used to engage students. Unfortunately, many educators are stuck in the past and they still use old concepts to teach 21st Century Learners. “Schools are still using materials developed to teach the students of decades ago, but today’s students are actually very different in the way they think and work” (Johnson, L., Smith, R., Levine, A., & Haywood, K., 2010, p.5). Schools are now turning their focus to changing the ways educators think and work. Many schools are offering job-embedded training to assist their teachers with new technologies that will engage students.

Game-Based learning is a technique that I assist my colleagues with integrating into their weekly lessons. “When embedded in the curriculum, they offer a path into the material that allows the student to learn how to learn along with mastering, and truly owning, the subject matter” (Johnson, L., Smith, R., Levine, A., & Haywood, K., 2010, p.18). Students on my campus have become actively involved with lessons that allow gaming opportunities. Recently, we used [www.sheppardsoftware.com](http://www.sheppardsoftware.com) to allow students to select games that provided enrichment to their math curriculum. Many of my colleagues agree with Jill Grell’s review on [www.sheppardsoftware.com](http://www.sheppardsoftware.com). Grell stated, “This site will be a daily part of our learning!  The kids were fighting over who could take the next turn at the learning game!  It is reinforcing everything I am trying to teach” (Grell, nd, Our Reviews, para. 4).

I recently asked Josh, “What do you wish your classroom looked like?” He replied, “I wish it was comfortable and equipped like our house. I would not be bored if my class could use laptops, iPods, and flat-screen TVs.” Similar to classrooms on my campus, Josh’s school has cluttered classrooms that lack student engagement. “Furniture for a 21st Century Classroom should be light and on wheels, allowing the room to be quickly and easily reconfigured to support a wide range of learning activities” (Caldwell, 2009, para. 5). In [*21st Century Classroom Demonstrates Model Learning Environment*](http://www.edb.utexas.edu/education/centers/ltc/news/2009/21stcen/)*,* Caldwell depicts a collaborative and student centered learning environment (Caldwell, 2009). Students need to have their hands on the SmartBoard and other technology tools. A classroom equipped with the technology tools is as ineffective as classroom that is not equipped with the tools if students are not actively using the tools themselves. Educators need to get over the fear that “students will break it, so we will not let them use it”.

A model classroom should appeal to the “surge of new technologies and social media innovations that are altering the media landscape” (xplanevisualthinking, 2009). This surge of new technologies includes mobile devices, texting capabilities, instant access, social networking, blogging, podcasting, and eBooks. “The devices available today are extremely multi-functional and robust, and grow more so with each passing year” (Johnson, L., Smith, R., Levine, A., & Haywood, K., 2011, p.14). In the video [Did You Know 4.0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ILQrUrEWe8), the producer speeds up the transitions in order to make a point: Everything is changing so fast; it *is* hard to absorb! “Convergence is everywhere. It is easier than ever before to reach a large audience, but harder than ever to really connect with it” (xplanevisualthinking, 2009).

By looking at our Campus STaR Chart and on-campus observation, data shows that our campus struggles with the SBEC requirements for the following standards:

* Standard IV. All teachers communicate information in different formats and for diverse audiences.
* Standard V. All teachers know how to plan, organize, deliver, and evaluate instruction for all students that incorporates the effective use of current technology for teaching and integrating the Technology Applications Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) into the curriculum.

Our campus technology plan includes ways to improve our campuses’ ability to meet the SBEC technology standards. A model classroom on our campus would include on-site, hands-on, and relevant professional development. Teachers and students would become trained on technology by allowing me to teach a hands-on mini lesson during the school day with the teacher and his/her class. This job-embedded professional development would allow our campus to meet our Core Content goals in our Campus Improvement Plan (CIP). As a campus, we have set integration of technology as a priority in all core curriculum. We have identified ways to integrate EInstruction, Interactive White Boards (IWB), Computers on Wheels (COW), video production, Internet, wikis, music, multimedia, and productivity tools. In order to reach these goals, teachers must have job-embedded professional development on integrating technology with core curriculum.

The STaR Chart also shows that our greatest weakness is Infrastructure for Technology. I somewhat agree with this assessment. I agree, because our campus continues to be in the “Beginning” stage for “Computers per Students”. We also seem to lack the opportunities for online learning, which may be a result of networking and connectivity issues. Our campus and district technology plans include goals that will address networking and connectivity issues. In 2010, Dallas ISD’s ERate funding was reinstated. Since the ERate funding has been reinstated, we can now move forward to create model classrooms that have better networking and connectivity. Dallas ISD “schools are beginning the transition from blocking web-based games to integrating them into their classrooms and curriculum” (Johnson, L., Smith, R., Levine, A., & Haywood, K., 2011, p.19). Our campus technology plan includes a surge of new technologies that will allow opportunities for project-based learning, job-embedded professional development, productivity, and innovative ways to reach diverse audiences.

A model classroom that included this surge of new technologies would be able to reach and engage a larger audience. It would also make a relevant and realistic connection with students. In a model, classroom educators would embrace the words of a nine-year-old, “Thanks, to video games!”

**What I Learned**

The decision to further my education brought forth a multitude of new knowledge and opportunities to self-reflect. During my internship, I learned many things about myself. I also learned how to refine and increase my technology leadership skills. Overall, my journey through Lamar University has allowed me to become a life-long learner and it has changed my attitude on how I approach leadership.

Reflective practice and self-reflection has affected my professional and personal life. “In teaching, as in life, maximizing meaning from experiences requires reflections” (Costa & Kallick 2000, p.61). Reflecting on my daily interactions with my colleagues and family members has changed the way I interact with others. I have learned that I must change my dictatorship ways in order to be an effective leader that provides cohesiveness and shared visions. In the past, I had great difficulty in allowing or trusting others to be part of the decision making process. I think reflective practices have assisted with me trusting others to be part of the decision making process. Currently, in my personal and professional interactions, I allow others to make decisions that I would normally exclude them from. It has been difficult to trust others and the decisions they make; especially, the decisions that affect me.

“By sharing, we can demonstrate and practice effective listening skills: probe for clarity and understanding, ask thoughtful questions, and share our metacognition” (Costa & Kallick 2000, p.61). Reflective practice has increased my leadership skills by allowing me to become an effective listener. Currently, in my position, I use reflective practice to improve my interactions with colleagues by effectively listening to their needs or concerns. After listening to their needs, I reflect on previous experiences to assist me with informed decision-making. My colleagues have been more receptive to change and technology integration since they feel someone is valuing them by listening and addressing their needs/concerns.

My current position as the campus Response to Intervention (RTI) CILT representative, test coordinator, Technology Integration Mentor, SBDM member, and SST member allowed me to get more hands-on leadership experience. As a life-long learner, I learned the importance of changing my attitude on how to approach negative employees who decreased campus morale. I revised my internship plan to allow me to get more hands-on leadership practice that would allow me to focus on creating a positive campus climate and culture. The rationale behind my revisions was inspired by McCormick’s discussion in *Self-efficacy and Leadership Effectiveness: Applying Social Cognitive Theory to Leadership*. Throughout his journal, McCormick discusses how people with high leadership self-efficacy are confident that they can effectively work with groups toward goals, so they challenge and motivate others, build group morale and collective efficacy, reduce group stress, persist towards goals in the face of obstacles, and achieve group goals (McCormick, 2001, pp. 22-33). Our campus needed leaders who could build group morale and motivate others. We were struggling with collective efficacy, so revising my internship was a significant moment in changing my attitude on how to lead my campus to a positive campus climate and culture.

One of the most attitude changing and life-long learning experiences that I encountered was implementing my Action Research over Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). During my action research, I learned that providing background knowledge to why the research is being done is fundamental for others to find value in your inquiry. It also provides an understanding of the need for such research. When others understand the reason for the research, they will want to know the design and/or steps taken during the inquiry. I also learned that others find validity in your research when you provide a detailed report of the entire process. Concrete details will allow others to view your research as something more than an opinion or personal reflection. By supporting your research with data and concluding thoughts, others will be able to formulate more questions or inquiries regarding your research. I learned that effectively implementing action research allows others to learn from your research and formulate their own action inquiries. Their action inquiries will prompt further research, thus continuing the collaboration amongst peers. This cycle allows us to be continuous life-long learners and action inquirers.

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